

WASHINGTON, DC - U.S. Rep. Charlie Melancon made the following statement after President Bush announced he vetoed the U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Health and Iraq Accountability Act (H.R. 1591), commonly referred to as the Supplemental Appropriations bill.

May 1, 2007

Contact: Robin Winchell (202) 225-4031

WASHINGTON, DC - U.S. Rep. Charlie Melancon made the following statement after President Bush announced he vetoed the U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Health and Iraq Accountability Act (H.R. 1591), commonly referred to as the Supplemental Appropriations bill.

"I am extremely disappointed the President decided to veto the Iraq/Hurricane Supplemental. Not only will this further delay getting funding to our troops, but the veto is also a huge setback for the people of south Louisiana who desperately need this hurricane recovery money. This bill would have provided billions for levee repairs, disaster relief for shrimpers, and rebuilding money for our schools, universities, and local governments. It also would have cut a lot of red tape that has crippled our recovery efforts along the Gulf Coast. With the President's veto today, the people of south Louisiana are back at square one in getting the help we need from our federal government."

"Let us be clear: this bill contains no mandatory dates for withdrawal from Iraq. The timetables the President is so strongly against are nonbinding recommendations that would make the Iraqi government accountable for securing their own country. We must set benchmarks and goals for the Iraqis so they know American support has limits and the future of Iraq is their responsibility."

Our troops have been working and fighting bravely in Iraq for over four years, and they and their families deserve to know that they will not be there indefinitely."

"I am disappointed by the President's veto, but I won't be discouraged. We have tremendous needs in south Louisiana, and I will keep fighting until they are met. My leadership has assured me that the Katrina/Rita recovery will not be pushed aside, and I will hold them to that as we plan our next step with the supplemental."

The Supplemental included a number of hurricane recovery needs Rep. Melancon called for,

including: funding for additional fisheries disaster relief, funding construction of the levee protection system on both the east and west bank in New Orleans and surrounding parishes, money for K-12 teacher recruitment and higher education assistance, the extension of a federal grant program for critically needed social services, and billions in funding for FEMA disaster recovery grants, with no local or state match required. Also included in the supplemental is language allowing Hurricane Katrina and Rita community disaster loans to be forgiven, an initiative Rep. Melancon has been working on with House Majority Whip James E. Clyburn and other Member of Congress from the Gulf Coast.

The bill also includes over \$100 billion to fund the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, which is over \$4 billion more than the President requested, and more than \$5 billion to ensure that returning troops and veterans receive the health care that they have earned with their service. \$3 billion is included for Mine Resistant Ambush Protected Vehicles, which have specially designed bottoms that help deflect the force of roadside bombs, the principal killer of U.S. forces in Iraq.

Finally, the bill includes provisions increasing the minimum wage by \$2.10 over two years, to \$7.25 an hour. It also includes a \$4.8 billion package of small business tax relief, which is fully offset.

###